

The Collapse Of The American Empire, Part I: Demographics, by Eric Striker

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As much as neo-conservative/Zionist ideologues like Robert Kagan write about the exceptional inevitability of the American world order, there is a general sinking feeling among the people of the United States that this country does not have a future.

Is this impression justified? Students of imperial decline can examine historical observations and parallels to decide.

Admittedly, utilizing historicism to try and predict geopolitical developments in the short and medium term is an imperfect science, often taking the form of prejudiced soothsaying or intuitive assertions.

Part of the problem is an overreliance on ancient history, particularly Rome, as a reference point for understanding the rise and fall of empire. The lack of specific data regarding the developments that culminated in Rome's downfall has led to subsequent commentators to fill in the blanks through the ideological prisms of their time. For example, 18th-century British historian Edward Gibbon singled out the Roman elite's behavioral decadence as the catalyst for its downfall. Individual moral purity was a strong fixation for Protestant Englishmen like Gibbons during his time, but this theory can be challenged by information revealing widespread moral excesses among Roman rulers during the lead up and fruition of the empire's 2nd Century AD territorial peak, e.g., the infamously obscene Caligula or Nero. Today, narratives blaming climate change for Rome's decline, a 21st century obsession, have gained a foothold.

A more direct comparison with the downfall of the Soviet Union, where detailed information *is* available, is more useful in seeking to investigate the malaise and long-term viability of the America empire. The United States of 2024 shares several demographic trends with the Soviet Union of the 1970s — “the era of stagnation” — that ultimately led to the vast Eurasian superpower's implosion in 1991.

When examining the short to medium term (10 to 30 years) prognosis of the American empire, we will also contrast it with its major adversaries: primarily Russia and China, and, supplementally (more so in later articles), Iran.

This author stresses that it is under no impression that either Russia, China, or Iran can defeat the American empire on their own. All three countries have different advantages over the United States in their world-historical struggle against neo-liberal unipolarity, but also disadvantages as individual contenders, suggesting that a future without *Pax Americana* could be a pre-WWII one limited to natural spheres of influence rather than a recreation of Washington's ambitious efforts for world domination. If the three powers coordinate and unite — as China and Russia's "no limits" partnership or the two powers' multi-year pacts with Iran suggest they have — the Washington-led, post-war liberal world order may go down sooner than we expect.

Russia and China remain behind America on a wide array of metrics, but what is impossible to deny is that they are starting to catch up while the United States is broadly at an inflection point. In 2021, Xi Jinping made this point in his address, affirming that "time and momentum" were on China's side.

One logical point to make is that, generally speaking, life for ordinary Russian and Chinese people is objectively getting better, while things are getting demonstrably worse in American. This alone can create divergences in national morale during a great power competition.

The economic, military, soft power, political, and other factors pointing to the coming failure and geopolitical neutralization of the US and its ideology on the world stage will be explored in future articles.

Part I: Demographics

One of the first symptoms of a nation's decline is a breakdown in social and human health. Often small changes in data related to population well-being speaks to an underwater iceberg of more significant and systematic problems within a people.

At the hump of the USSR's "Brezhnev stagnation" in the mid to late 1970s, demographers began speculating about the health of the once seemingly omnipotent empire after discovering that the nation's rates of infant mortality were beginning to rise. Though this increase was minor — only a few percentage points — it broke a cycle of decades of rapid gains in the survivability of Soviet infants since the end of World War II.

This was perplexing to mainstream observers at the time, as the Soviet Union was, financially, enjoying relative prosperity due to a global oil export boom triggered by the Arab League's 1973 oil embargo. The USSR under Leonid Brezhnev (who ruled from 1964-1982) planned its economy to become a military peer of the United States (especially in the realm of nuclear weapons), was industrially powerful, and matched or led its rivals in the world in various cutting-edge fields, such as aerospace.

Yet despite the superficial success of the system, the USSR's most important asset, its *people*, began showing signs of decay and misery.

Today in the United States, we are seeing similar patterns.

In the Soviet context, Central Asian Minorities within the multi-ethnic Soviet space, who benefited from special economic, social and legal privileges (before America, the Bolsheviks of the Soviet Union created the first nation to practice official racial discriminate against its own ethnic majority citizens, as detailed in Terry Martin's 2001 book *The Affirmative Action Empire*), grew at much faster rates than the less fertile Slavic population during the 1960s and 70s. By 1979, ethnic Russians declined to barely 52% of the Soviet population.

As Robert D. Putnam's 2000 book *Bowling Alone* has shown, multiculturalism/ multiracialism is strongly correlated with alienation and distrust. As in the USSR in its period of downturn, America's racial makeup has radically changed in the last 50 years, with white people now making up less than 58% of the population.

Besides the national problems created by racial and cultural alienation, changes in demographics lead to changes to a society overall. Nations naturally begin taking on the character of the home countries of the new people who populate them, which in the American context means falling behind peripheries of its empire, such as Western Europe, in critical sectors. This is another commonality with the 1970s USSR, where the

Soviet homeland itself was racked with dysfunction and living standards were falling behind ethnically/racially homogenous Warsaw Pact protectorates such as Hungary or East Germany. It may be possible for non-white, non-Asian nations to achieve success, but this would require illiberal governance, ethno-cultural cohesion and enforced discipline that thoroughly multi-racial countries (like America or Brazil) appear to lack. Predictably, it is no coincidence that the United States is facing falling living standards and social degradation, including among the once prosperous white majority, which place it at a grave disadvantage against geopolitical competitors.

In 2022, the Center for Disease Control reported that American infant mortality rose 3% for the first time in decades, from 5.44 infant deaths per 1,000 live births the previous year to 5.60. In 2023, no ground was made up in tackling this problem: the same figure was reported.

Comparatively, Russia's infant mortality is now lower. In 2023, there were 4.807 deaths per 1,000 live births, a 3.8% decline from 2022. This is a remarkable feat of the Vladimir Putin government. In 2003, early in Putin's reign, Russia suffered an alarming 16.156 deaths per 1,000 live births, while the United States had an infant morbidity rate of 6.85 at this time.

On the Chinese front, their massive population lags behind the US with 8.4 infants dying per 1,000 births. We can consult with Xi Jinping's quote about "momentum" here. China has seen this statistic consistently falling by over 3% every year, as America suffers the inverse, suggesting that like Russia they can be forecasted to overcome this hurdle.

Much of this rise in infant mortality correlates with the increase in America's minority population. Blacks and Amerindians in particular have high rates of infant mortality due to neglectful activities such as drug use, alcoholism, abuse, as well as overburdened or poorly administered minority-run health care services. At the same time, the infant mortality rate is going up for white mothers as well, suggesting that these symptoms of deterioration are harming the white American community as well.

This withering of fundamental life measures is part of a broader trend. From 2019 to 2023, US life expectancy fell from 79 years to now 76. This figure is more at home among developing nations than those we consider advanced.

Among developed US liberal peers, Germany's current life expectancy is 82 years, UK 82, France 83, and so on.

Following a modest increase from 2022 to 2023, Chinese life expectancy now surpasses that of Americans, at 77 years, a historic first for China.

Russia, which is fighting a brutal war in Ukraine, still saw an increase in life expectancy from 2022 to 2023: 72 to 73.

Returning to 2003 numbers, the American life expectancy was 77, while China's was 73 and Russia's 65.

When comparing Soviet data during the era of stagnation, we again see a similarity with the US. The politburo began internally ringing alarm bells when they discovered that life expectancy suddenly fell in a form similar to the US, from 69.5 in 1971 to 67.9 in 1978, a fact publicly disclosed to much controversy during *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*.

America's dwindling life expectancy and rising infant mortality, as in the case of the Soviet Union, is being fueled by an explosion in substance abuse, obesity, suicide, institutional failures, and other informal measures of nihilism and despair rooted in *anomie*.

In the year 2023, there were a whopping 112,000 drug overdose deaths, primarily among the young.

This dwarfs Russia, which itself is seen to have a drug problem. During a recent surge in drug overdoses in 2021, the nation with less than half the US population suffered 7,316 fatal ODs, driven in part by boredom or loneliness during COVID.

In China, with its population of 1.4 billion and with its historic crisis of opium addiction in the rearview mirror, the rate of drug-related deaths is approximately 49,000 per year.

In the realm of suicide, Russia has long had the reputation of being a world leader in this category, but the US has now quietly surpassed it.

In 2021, Russia suffered 10.7 self-inflicted deaths per 100,000 people. In the same year, the United States' rate jumped to 14.04 per 100,000.

By comparison, in the year 2000, Russians committed suicide at the rate of 39 deaths per 100k, so their new figures are a massive leap forward when tackling the issue.

In America, we are suffering an astonishing step backwards. In 2000, Americans were 40% less likely to kill themselves, with the rate of 10.4 per 100,000.

For China, suicide rates have declined from 10.88 to 5.25 between 2010 and 2021.

In the world of serious mental illness, the United States is also one upping its rivals.

In 2022, approximately 5% of Americans suffered from severe mental disorders, such as psychosis or schizophrenia, while 1 out of 5 US citizens are being medically treated for milder forms like clinical depression.

In Russia, around 8.8% of citizens are diagnosed with clinical depression. Only 0.3% of Russians are schizophrenics. This is another sharp statistical decrease from the recent Russian past.

It will come to nobody's surprise that Americans are the most obese in the world, a key co-morbidity accelerating these demographic problems. This does not require number crunching.

What may surprise some, however, is that citizens of the 1970s and 80s Soviet Union were also unusually overweight.

Soviet citizens began gaining weight during the Brezhnev era due to the wider availability of food compared to the past.

In one medical study commissioned by the Soviet state during Perestroika, it was found that 30% of citizens were overweight and 2/3s were sedentary, despite ample opportunities for engaging in exercise and sports. This clashed with the Soviet Union's vaunted efforts to become internationally known as an athletic superpower.

This was one fact the Soviet regime could not hide in the 1970s. To tackle the obesity epidemic, the government sought technocratic solutions, which led to research discovering many special diets and treatments popularized today such as intermittent fasting.

Contrary to Cold War propaganda from both sides connecting obesity with capitalism, Soviet citizens were fatter than Americans. In 1975, only 20% of Americans were considered overweight.

Soviet data released during Glasnost and Perestroika from the 1970s and 80s also found huge increases in deaths due to alcoholism, increases in narcotics related fatalities, and ballooning suicide rates. This social crisis